

DOCTRINAL AND CONTROVERSIAL.

"THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."

The Editors reserve the right to erase all improper personalities and objectionable expressions found in any article accepted for this department; and they alone shall be the judges.

A Serial of Instruction Inviting Grave Research. No. 2.

Under a strictly apostolic regimen, this reformed doctrine spread, and was embraced by considerable numbers of pious, intelligent, worthy communicants. That they numbered among their adherents the literary and progressive minds of the day, is evinced from the fact that they were leaders in the establishing of Sunday schools, and foremost in introducing the printing business on the American continent. Their simple, unfettered Christianity, unlogged by ecclesiastical machinery, inspired them as it did the direct followers of Christ and Paul, in the first centuries, to throw the weight of converted faculties into the various channels of thought and action. The principles embodied in their religious experience, were similar to those that gave to civilization its first impetus, and that has culminated in the gifted minds and magnificent erudition of this century. All this we look back to, with undisguised admiration as the legitimate offspring of a purely Gospel religion, such as our church fathers revived from the wreck of an effete and dogma ridden system of worship. We go with them now to their worship, attend their business meetings, assist arbitrating their difficulties, and in all their duties we find the Gospel their only standard of appeal in all matters pertaining to salvation, or church government, and as a result, commendable harmony, love, and union.

Differences that existed were mantled with charity, and by closely adhering to God's revealed will, all minds and hearts gravitated voluntarily toward a common centre. Thus a half a century passed from the first immersion in Aeder, in 1708, until Annual Meetings began to be held. Previous to this time, and for a long time after, the conferences of the "leading brethren" were informal, simple, and of the most innocent character. Advice was given and taken, questions were propounded and answered, and a general interchange of views upon mooted questions, was about the extent of the church's conference jurisdiction. But as the saying goes, "Great oaks from little acorns grow." The original councils took the form of yearly conferences about the year 1780, but the records previous to 1830 are very meager. It was a gradual blending of uninspired ingenuity, of plans and devices to bolster up and make definite the discipline of Christ, by such additional advice as was lacking in the Gospel, yet essential to make it cover the ever varying exigencies of church government. They took their model largely from the Quaker yearly conferences, and based their authority upon Acts 15.

With the popular instrument of corruption gradually incorporated as a factor in the church, it was at once upon the highway, back into the very vortex from which the Schwarzenau brethren so gallantly rescued it. Although comparatively harmless for years, and wearing the resemblance of expediency, yet it gradually divided the allegiance of the church between the Gospel and the minister, between Christ and the conference, until in the fulness of time, the mandate of Annual Meeting was more revered, apparently, than the word of God, and the conference became the idol of the church as the golden calf did among the Israelites. Advice was the only product of these yearly conventions, for three quarters of a century; but the mill was grinding, and the hopper must be replenished. From sacred and theological speculations, the scope of these meetings extended to the most private and sumptuary interferences.

It afforded a convenient vehicle upon which the revengeful, and meddlesome, could transport their fanciful grievances to conference, and receive such "advice" as would conflict with the practices of their brethren, with a view, no doubt, of curbing them in the exercise of the commonest customs and conveniences of life. It also afforded church officers, and those inclined to rule a legal method of enforcing their peculiar views upon others. Whether or not this view is too extreme to conform with facts in every instance, it still had that

tendency, and while we may frankly accord the ancient brethren considerable honesty, it finally led to such corruption and dishonesty, as the annals of ecclesiastical history is seldom burdened with. To show the scope of these advisory conventions, it was "advised" in 1850, that a brother should not purchase cattle and other animals, and follow butchering, hire or rent a stall in a market-house, and attend market as a butcher, every market morning. In 1827 and 1828 respectively, it was decided that carpets "cannot and should not be" allowed in the brethren's houses, "because it leads to elevation." In 1828 it was decided as "most advisable" for brethren to take no part in Sunday schools, class meetings, and the like, (under the control of other denominations.) In 1864, gold watches were considered as liable to lead to pride, and it was decided not advisable to wear them. In 1856, it was decreed that sisters should wear caps. In 1849, brethren were forbidden to wear fur, or cloth caps, and sisters, likewise, forbidden to wear trimmed straw, or leghorn bonnets, as it was considered inconsistent with the word of God. In 1866, the wearing of frock and sack-coats, dusters, shawls, &c. among the brethren, and going without caps, wearing hoops, hats, veils, overcoats, jewelry, &c., among the sisters, were expressly interdicted with Matt. 18—as the remedy. Also the brethren, at the same date, were commanded to wear their hair parted on the top of the head, or all combed back in a plain manner, or combed straight down all around the head, and not to have the hair and beard trimmed according to the custom of the world." In 1822, the taking of interest for money was forbidden. In 1844, it was decided that "No brother has any right in the Gospel, to sue at law. In 1842, it was considered not advisable to lecture on temperance.

In 1843, the obtaining and selling of patent rights; in 1836, the taking of pensions, as in case of military service; and 1863—4 attending political meetings, and voting at elections, were advised against. In 1857, likenesses were forbidden, and in 1851, it was decided "utterly wrong" for brethren to hold prayer meetings and invite others of different belief to take part. In 1857, high schools were considered unadvisable, as "knowledge puffeth up &c." In 1825, brethren were forbidden to teach singing schools, and in 1838, Sunday schools were forbidden. In 1855, tombstones were considered wrong; likewise, the wearing of suspenders, boots, use of dinner bells, buggy springs, &c., are said to have been forbidden in the past.

The foregoing are but a few of the hundreds of articles of advice, and in many instances the references to Matt. 18, savored strongly of more than a jarring hint to heed said advice. Thus article was added to article, and page to page, until it taxed the inventive mind to furnish new material, apparently, to keep the Annual Meeting running to its full capacity. It afforded a fertile field for mental athletes to display their powers, and created an unwholesome rivalry, for position and power. With this institution gradually centralizing, and even usurping power, it required no seer to foretell the end that must inevitably arrive. The history of Christendom bristled with unheeded warnings as the ship of Zion drifted into the breakers of destruction.

(To be continued.)

"Souls not Immortal."

BY E. MASON.

"Souls not Immortal" in No. 13, contains some strange assertions. The expression, "saving immortal souls" seems to be objectionable to brother A.

In the first paragraph he gives "exemption from death or annihilation; imperishable," as the definition of immortal. He then asks: "If a soul is imperishable and exempt from death, how can it be saved? or what is it saved from?" Why, my brother, what is the matter with you? The soul is saved from the terrible doom pronounced against the wicked, see Matt. 25. The very fact that the souls of the wicked are to be punished in eternity, is only a proof of the immortality of the soul.

Does our brother believe in the annihilation of

of the wicked? Then, if so, we would be pleased to hear his explanation of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and the many teachings of the Lord of a future punishment. If the soul of man continues to live in eternity, either in heaven or hell, is not that immortality?

Bro. A. gives Matt. 10:28 as proof for his assertions. Jesus says, "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." According to this, men may kill the body, but not the soul. That still lives, though the body be dead. Then notice, that we are to fear him who is able to, destroy, not kill, both soul and body in Gehenna. The meaning of destroy is not necessarily to put an end to existence. Job uses the expression in another sense in 19:10.

I cannot see why you object to the expression "A never dying soul to save." If we are to take the teachings of the Bible in their plainest sense, it is orthodox. Too many of us are in danger of putting a false construction on the doctrines of the Bible, by taking isolated texts, and separating them from all their connections and thus wresting them from their meaning to prove some preconceived idea. We object to this separating of the Scriptures to suit our own opinions. Take the teachings of the Bible as a whole, and if it does not teach the immortality of the soul, it teaches nothing. The future punishment and happiness of the soul after death, are taught everywhere. If a soul lives in distress and punishment in eternity and continues to live, that implies immortality. I have no doubt, there could be a great deal of quibbling indulged in concerning this question, but no one will dare deny that the words "everlasting" and "eternal" are applied to the state of the wicked after the death of the body, as well as to the happiness of those who have been sheltered by the blood of Christ.

REPLY.—Has the brother forgotten that the Scriptures say, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die?" Did Ezekiel write an untruth under the direction of the spirit? Can immortal souls die?

I can read of no punishment outside of the second death. It is not immortality to exist in either hell or heaven. Immortality can exist either in heaven or hell, and will experience neither torment nor suffering.

St. Paul says, "If the dead rise not, then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished." The Apostle recognizes the possibility of all there is of the saint perishing—immortality is imperishable.

Brother Mason will discover in time that the Bible does not teach that souls are immortal.

Truly, destruction does not necessarily mean an end of existence; neither does death. Men are dead in trespasses and sin; but this does not imply non-existence. They are insensible to good or righteousness; so the soul in Gehenna will be dead to the joys and pleasures of the home of the blessed. Ordinarily, death does not mean annihilation; and to say that souls are ever dying, has reference to condition and not to inherent qualities when used with reference to rewards and punishments. The soul of man, through the influence of Satan, is continually drifting to a state of insensibility to the joys and pleasures of truth and godliness, and from that death it needs to be saved.

In the epistle of James, we read, "Let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death." Can an immortal soul die? What?

"A never dying soul to save." WESLEY. | "Shall save a soul from death." ST. JAMES.

A.

Heart-work must be God's work. Only the great heart-maker can be the great heart-breaker. If I love him my heart will be filled with his spirit and obedient to his commands.—BAXTER.

There must be a way of handling money that is noble as the handling of the sword in the hands of the patriot. Neither the mean man who loves it, nor the faithless man who despises it, knows how to handle it.—THOMAS WINGEOLD.

Candor is the seal of a noble mind, the ornament of man, the sweetest charm of woman, the scorn of rascals, and the rarest virtue of sociability.—BENTZEL-STERNAU.